



Jobs worth Fighting For

THE POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

IAMAW | Canada | May 2020

Introduction

The pandemic has ravaged the economy, and a recovery will be protracted, taking place in stages for the foreseeable future. This crisis has also exposed gaps in workplace policies, and legislation but also, the significance of certain sectors of the economy, which have either been chronically underfunded, or have received very little support from the government. At the same time, the Canadian economy is experiencing a significant deficit, which is usually financed through privatization, cutting back on public services and adjusting taxation policies that shift the burden on the middle and working class.

It's also clear that the world of work will change, too. Workplace protocols, policies, health and safety will all be impacted, and while it's important to modify such policies to protect workers, the trend seems to indicate that infringements of individual rights and freedoms, as well as of collective agreements, are likely. This calls for a balanced approach to protecting the rights of workers collectively and individually, with the need to develop policies for the protection of the workplace as a whole, including clients, residents and patients, where applicable.

As a result of these new developments, the IAMAW Canada has developed a guide for post-COVID workplaces, and in pursuit of continuing to advocate for the Jobs worth Fighting for agenda. The content is broken into health and safety recommendations, collective agreement priorities, the economy, taxation policy, women's and human rights issues.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, given quickly changing environments, rather a guide to define the IAMAW'S position on the post-pandemic recovery.

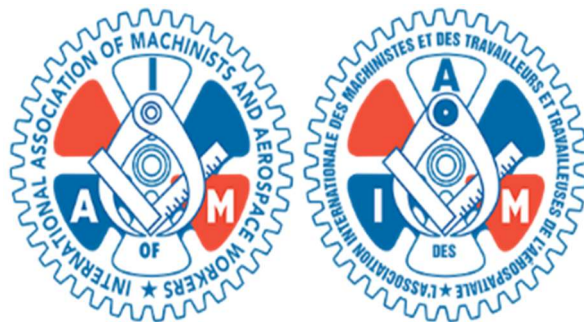
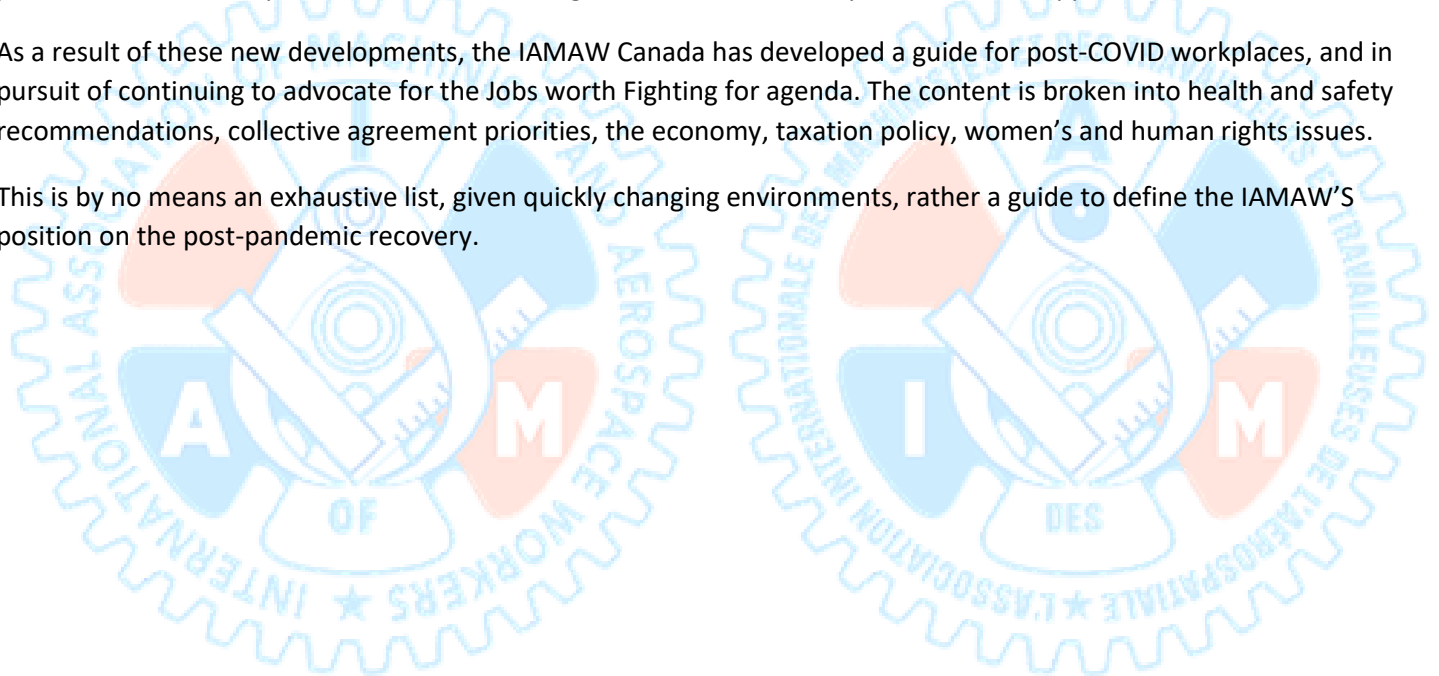


Table of Contents

Macro-view.....3

- Short term.....3
- Long-term.....4

Unemployment Insurance Reform.....4

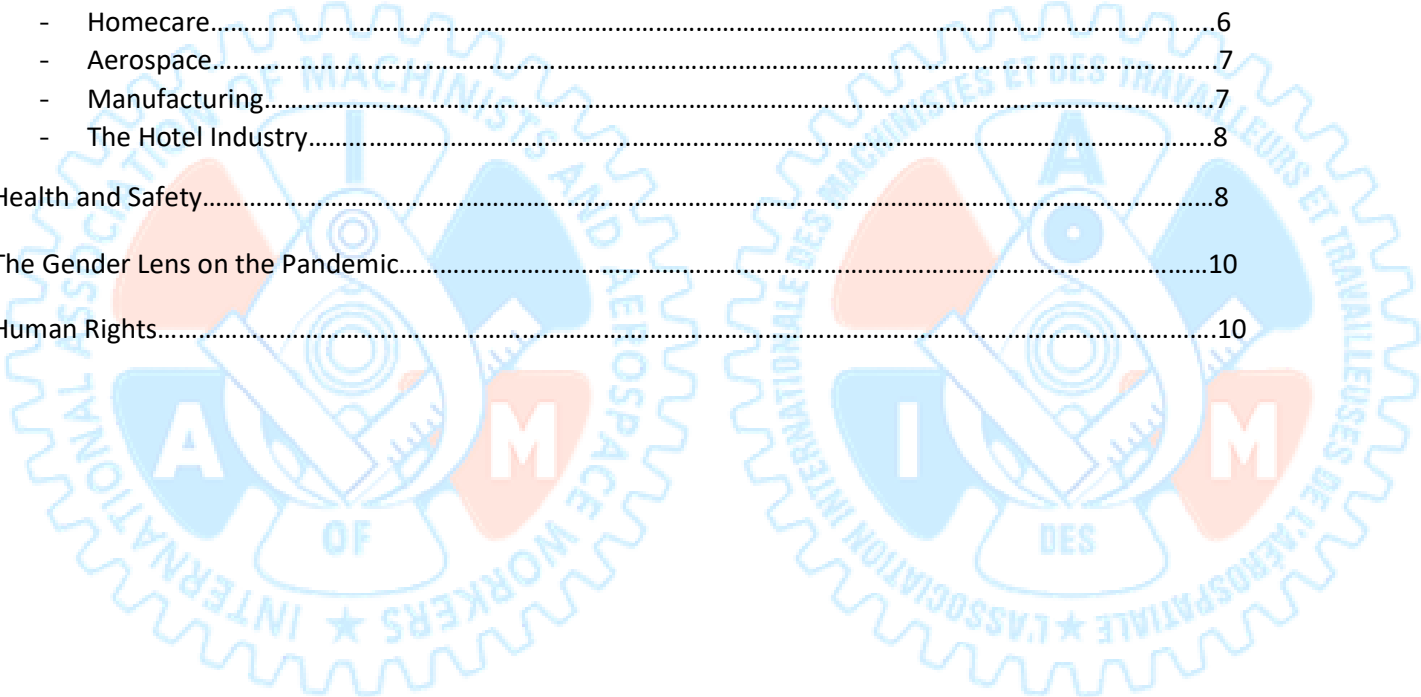
Industry Specific Recommendations.....5

- Air Transportation.....5
- Healthcare.....6
- Homecare.....6
- Aerospace.....7
- Manufacturing.....7
- The Hotel Industry.....8

Health and Safety.....8

The Gender Lens on the Pandemic.....10

Human Rights.....10



Macro-View

The deficit post COVID19 is expected to reach \$ 1 trillion in 2021, making it the highest deficit on record. Federal debt could be as high as 48%, meaning that over the next few years, governments will look for ways to finance the deficit to bring it down. Political mandates will likely be focused on reducing spending, privatization, selling government owned entities, and higher taxation. Historically, paying down deficits has impacted working people to a great extent, with the effect of erosion of the quality of jobs. Crises such as these tend to restructure industries and sectors, typically, reducing the number of unionized jobs, as well as, pushing more people into precarious and low wage work.

In the short term, we recommend that;

- Provincial and federal legislation requiring justification of major layoffs and shutdowns is strengthened, and includes consultation of workplace parties. As part and parcel of this legislation, a Jobs Commissioner should be appointed with power and resources to stop and mitigate layoffs, and oversee corporate funding for adjustment costs of laid-off workers and affected communities.
- Re-opening of businesses and recalling of workers be done incrementally, and that the number of workers recalled does not exceed available PPE. Employers must demonstrate that there is enough adequate PPE to protect those returning to work.
- Introduction of financial aid include protection of jobs, pensions, benefits and protects terms and conditions of collective agreements in unionized workplaces. Equally important, is that government aid have in place protections against finances being used for corporate bonuses, payouts to shareholders, and that there are limits on dividends, share buy-backs and executive pay. Lastly, firms in receipt of government aid would have to pledge to keep jobs in Canada, and in industries where relevant, create more full-time positions rather than creating precarious positions.
- Any financial aid programs that are introduced are premised on a tri-partite model that involves labour unions in discussions
- That contact tracing aps require a person's permission, and that information about the use, and protection of privacy are clearly outlined so as to enable informed decision making. Such aps should never be sold to third parties, used to discipline workers, track productivity, for time-motion studies, or for any other purpose other than tracking virus transmission.
- Sector councils established under the new bridge financing program, LEEF, include labour unions
- Procurement policies are developed to ensure that government purchases are sourced in Canada
- The Bankruptcy Act is amended to give workers and pensioners claims the highest priority and to raise the coverage limits of the Wage Earner Protection Program. In some jurisdictions, businesses claiming bankruptcy are obligated to pay for any environmental damage they have contributed to, despite a bankruptcy claim. This is a positive development, but the same should apply to pensioners who rely on their deferred wages as a source of income.
- As remote work may become a more popular form of work organization, it is imperative that workers who are in these work arrangements are protected by health and safety legislation, limits on working hours, paid overtime, and that the home is treated as a workplace for the duration of one's shift, or hours worked.
- Workers with responsibilities to care for children or vulnerable adults, or who are at elevated risk for poor outcomes if they are exposed to the virus must be protected from reprisals if they cannot return to work when their workplace re-opens.
- Institute universal affordable childcare

- Governments must commit to robust enforcement of these statutes which must protect all workers and level the playing field.

In the long-term, we are advocating for:

- A fair taxation policy that shifts the burden from the middle class, to corporations and businesses that generate massive profits without paying proportional taxes. A more progressive tax system would also help pay for essential public services. Tax cuts and other changes over several decades have disproportionately benefited corporations and the wealthy, contributing to growing inequality of incomes and wealth, and creating structural deficits that are used to justify the destruction of basic public services. We need to shift the tax burden, and ensuring corporations and wealthy individuals pay their share by;
 - i) Increasing top income tax rates and introduce a wealth tax for the top 1%
 - ii) Crack down on international tax evasion and avoidance by reforming international tax rules and ending double-non-taxation agreements with tax havens
 - iii) Eliminate regressive tax loopholes that almost exclusively benefit the top 10% and 1%
- Stopping the move towards “self-regulation” of safety systems and downloading regulatory functions to the private sector
- Adequate funding to key sectors, and public services
- Supporting domestic firms, particularly those in the manufacturing sector, to reduce potential vulnerabilities like ones experienced during the pandemic. To achieve this goal, limits on the transfer of work by Canadian businesses to foreign locations should be put in place
- Implementation of living wages in sectors where low wages are chronic and work schedules are precarious
- Implementing a National Pharmacare program
- Implementing universal childcare
- Implementing policies that redistribute wealth and power and address inequity and poverty
- Promoting a national training policy including:
 - o access to E.I. training funds for employed workers
 - o guaranteed access for all workers to a minimum of 40 hours of paid training annually, during working hours, with full job protection
 - o employer levies to fund training – apprenticeship, in-school, on the job – as well as paid leave allowances
- Establish an employment strategy both in the short term and long term so our youth will be prepared to meet the needs of future employers. In addition to youth, the policy should include a recruitment plan for workers from non-traditional groups
- Ensuring that apprenticeship programs are at the very least standardized across Canada to allow for mobility of skilled trade workers
- Ensuring workers have access to paid sick leave
- Ensure the right to organize and the use of card check certification for all sectors and provinces
- Ensuring that workplaces allow workers to access paid domestic violence leave, or a leave that serves the same purpose and is flexible to needs of those experiencing domestic violence

Unemployment Insurance Reform

Reform the Unemployment Insurance system to allow for greater coverage of workers, industries and work arrangements by amending eligibility requirements, namely, hours worked. EI’s objective was to stabilize an economy during a severe downturn by ensuring consumer spending and that purchasing power was maintained, however, with a

number of adjustments over the years, eligibility requirements have become more stringent, while the duration of EI, maximum payouts and the number of eligible applicants has decreased. We advocate for a change in a reduction of hours worked to a flat 360 hours across Canada, ending the disqualifications for quits, termination for “cause” and pension income. In order to finance the program, we are asking that the program return to its original funding structure, which involved workers, employers and the federal government. Given the rapid advancement of technological change, years of sluggish economic growth, recessions, and the regularity of global viruses and their effects on the global economy, disruptions in labour markets and economies are inevitable and require a robust safety net through provision of EI.

Industry Specific Recommendations

Air Transportation Industry:

The impact of the pandemic on this industry has been especially harsh. Travel restrictions and declining passenger confidence will have lasting effects, which will inevitably change the landscape in the industry. We propose the following:

- Changing the ownership and management structure of Canada’s major airport so that airports will be accountable to meet long-term national social, economic and environmental goals, as well as the interests of regions and workers
- Ensure the long-term viability of Canadian air carriers, including limits on foreign ownership, domestic routes for domestic carriers, and action to stop asset-stripping
- Strengthening legislation on contract flipping to prevent this practice and the race to the bottom, which reduces the quality and safety of jobs
- Ensure government funding is tied to creation of well-paid and safe jobs
- Ensure that maintenance of aircraft is done in Canada, and that there is a repatriation plan that would secure jobs of Canadian maintenance workers
- Ensuring airport workers receive living wages depending on area of residence
- Ensure employers are providing training to workers to prepare them for new workplaces, materials, tools and work processes post COVID19.



Many protocols will change as a preventative measure to ensure passenger safety. Recently, IATA has released a guidance document, which is problematic for several reasons. Therefore, we are recommending that new health and safety protocols take into account the following;

- PPE availability should match staff levels to ensure that all workers have access to PPE during their shift
- Employers should develop pandemic plans, or at the very least, infectious disease prevention plans, that include sanitization, distancing measures, workplace controls to avoid cross contamination and limit spread of infectious disease through shared surfaces, at the very least, increasing the number of hand sanitization stations.
- Testing should only be done if necessary and justifiable, and should meet workplace testing standards. More importantly, worker privacy and protection of personal information must be maintained.
- Contact tracing should only be relied on if there is a confirmed COVID19 case, and clear and rigorous rules about the privacy of such information must be in place
- Finally, health and safety protocols should be workplace specific, and public health guidelines should be taken to be general, and therefore, inadequate for specific issues in different workplaces.

Healthcare

Globally, healthcare workers have disproportionately contracted COVID19 raising concerns important questions about protection of workers and preparedness of healthcare employers for a pandemic. Numerous gaps have become apparent, highlighting issues in chronic underfunding, understaffing and general lack of preparedness. The long term sector has shown to be especially vulnerable, as indicated by far too many resident deaths, but also worker infections and deaths. However, workers in homecare and retirement homes face unique and specific issues that have yet to be addressed.

For the health sector we recommend the following;

- Spending on healthcare has declined in recent years, despite an increase in usage of health services. We are asking the government to increase funding, address staffing shortages but also address precarious working conditions
- That provincial legislation is developed to prevent contract flipping for services rendered in long-term care facilities
- Include the long term care sector under the *Canada Health Act* to secure funding and reduce possibilities for privatization
- Keep in place wage premiums, and limitations on ability to work in a single facility. This is particularly important for low wage earners. Equally important is implementation of a process that ensures that the wage premium is passed on to employees fully
- Ensure workers have the ability to take paid leaves for sickness, childcare or eldercare needs
- Ensure all workers have a living wage with full time hours and benefits
- Develop pandemic and infectious disease protocols that are consistent across the province; this will be especially important if the order limiting healthcare workers to a single facility is not maintained
- Ensure that employers follow the precautionary principle in their policies, as it's shown to give employers the legal premise for their actions that protects them, but it also protects the health and safety of patients, residents and workers
- Ensure employers have a month's supply of PPE on site. If this isn't feasible, then institute a process for regional stockpiling to ensure speedy accessibility to PPE.
- Use the presumptive measure for employee's to file WSIB claims and expand the definition of "critically ill" to include any illness or disease, including any occupational illness or infectious disease, which could place life in jeopardy
- Ensure workplace inspections take place regularly and orders are written and given high priority to complete. Prevent virtual inspections of workplaces, which has shown to be ineffective and places lives in danger.
- Ensure directive #5, as issued under Section 77.7 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7 is followed as a minimum standard and the JHSC could recommend greater standards than those currently in place. That a similar guideline be implemented in other provinces

Homecare: Healthcare workers in homecare settings face unique challenges given the nature of their workplaces, which takes places in people's homes. Engineering controls are particularly challenging to implement, placing an even higher importance on provision of adequate PPE. Under current circumstances, workers are asked to call clients ahead of time and check if they're exhibiting any COVID19 symptoms, and the information is not always factual. Furthermore, there is no control over how many people may be in a client's home during a visit. In addition to this, hours of work are irregular and shifts are spaced out.

Public policy has focused on limiting work to a single facility, however, the nature of homecare is that workers visit multiple homes in a given day. Workers are given masks, which they are reusing, and some employers may be given face shields.

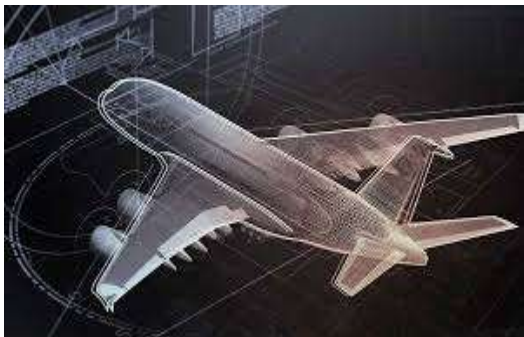
With closures of public spaces, and washrooms, homecare workers have a difficult time finding restrooms, as they do not use restrooms in a client's home. Hand washing protocols are challenging without access to a facility. Lastly, workers in homecare and LTC have high rates of workplace injuries and illnesses, which compete with levels experienced by firefighters and police officers. Given the unique challenges of workers in homecare, below is a list of recommendations, which is not exhaustive. For a full list that is specific to Home Care environments, please consult http://www.osach.ca/SG/Product/lap_301.pdf

We recommend the following;

- That PSWs working in homecare settings are given the highest form of protection to limit the spread of COVID19 from client to client.
- As per guidelines on *Health and Safety in the Home Care Environment*, when an infectious disease is airborne, workers should be provided N95s at all times, by droplets, a surgical mask and eye protection should be provided, by direct contact, gowns and disposable non-permeable gloves should be provided, including equipment cleaning protocols, and lastly, when transmission is unknown, the precautionary principle should be followed to protect the health and safety of workers and clients.
- That public policy address unique challenges of workplaces that are people's homes, and workers' health and safety protections in those environments
- That employers address the following, establish joint health and safety committees, conducting assessments of workplace hazards, training workers, providing appropriate PPE, establishing safe operating procedures for the workplace, especially, in a pandemic situation, reporting accidents and cases of COVID19.
- That workers are educated about their right to refuse
- That workers have benefits that are accessible and help them manage workplace injuries
- That workers have access to use of facilities and restrooms between shifts. This is especially important in situations where handwashing protocols are needed.
- Creation of shifts that secure workers full-time hours. Consistency in services is not just beneficial for workers, but client care, as well
- Increasing pay for PSWs through licensing and regulation

Aerospace

The aerospace industry is especially vulnerable given its reliance on the air transportation industry, but also because the Canadian industry is export reliant and is part of a broader supply chain. Adding to this vulnerability, is the industry's concentration on civil aviation with very little activity on the military side. We recommend that;



- Recommendations outlined in, "Grounded Potential" still apply. Building a strong national industry reduces the reliance on supply chains that are easily disrupted, and reduces reliance on international material procurement. In doing so, other connected industries would be supported, as well
- Ensure industry specific funding is available once the pandemic ends, which will be even more important given the economic impact
- The IAMAW is consulted in cases where restructuring of the business will have an impact on the workforce

- That workers have access to training given expected changes in production methods
- That employers develop pandemic and infectious disease control policies that are updated regularly
- That any plans that involve technological change are discussed with the union and that provincial legislation on technological change is followed
- That where remote work is considered, the union is consulted in advance and union recommendations are implemented in new policies

Manufacturing

Given individual countries' vulnerability and inability to supply essential goods during the pandemic has, a global trend has arisen to protect domestic industries. Many companies are looking to base corporate activities to their country of origin. It is expected that we will enter an era of de-globalization, as indicated by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development(UNCTAD), the main United Nations body dealing with trade, investment and development issues. UNCTAD reports that global FDI flows may fall by 40% in 2020-21, and cross-border mergers and acquisitions will also continue to decline.

We recommend the following;

- Maintaining the federal government's policy to tighten foreign direct investment (FDI) for corporations in public health and those involved in the supply chains of critical goods and services. That the threshold for review of FDI made by foreign-state owned enterprises is lowered to zero. We support policies that limit FDI in key industries, including manufacturing.
- Continued investments in key manufacturing industries
- Limiting outsourcing of work outside of Canada
- Development of training programs that prepare youth and under-represented workers to enter into jobs in the manufacturing sector. Also, that a recruitment plan include attracting workers from non-traditional backgrounds to careers in the sector
- Work with labour organizations to fully benefit the employees, through protected pension plans and flexible workplace schedules to accommodate the needs of all workers

The Hotel Industry

The cancellation of business conferences and conventions across the country is costing cities hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue as the COVID-19 pandemic devastates the tourism industry. Occupancy rates are below 10%, and in a 48 hour time frame, occupancy rates (as of March 21st) dropped by 50%. Major hotel brands have begun closing locations in Canada, but smaller hotels have been impacted as well. Hotels usually sit at a rate of 90% occupancy as they head into the summer season, but right now, hotels are vacant.



Hotel occupancy rates sit below 10 per cent on average, prompting more than 4,100 closures and 250,000 layoffs across the country — 83 per cent of the industry workforce — as reported by the Hotel Association of Canada.

It will take some time for the industry to recover, which certainly is not likely this summer season. The IAMAW recognizes that the workplaces will be different, and may pose new challenges, especially in terms of health and safety.

As business resumes, we recommended the following;

- Maintaining fair pay and living wages
- Ensuring workers have access to appropriate PPE and training
- If new sanitizing materials are introduced and new equipment, we strongly recommend that workers are trained, and aware of hazards when working with new materials and chemicals
- In cases of technological change, that employers provide information about the workforce impact of such changes and consult with unions in a meaningful consultations about mitigation plans
- Ensure that workers have health and safety committees to address workplace issues
- Addressing staffing shortages
- Improving working conditions through reducing precarity in the industry

Health and Safety

In this area we continue to advocate for our member's right to know, to participate and refuse unsafe work. Additionally, it is more important than ever to ensure that workers have access to training and adequate supplies of PPE in the workplace. As part of this, we see joint health and safety committees as a critical piece of the health and safety framework and as a key body that oversees health and safety in workplaces.

We ask that employers develop health and safety policies based on the precautionary principle, which not only gives them legal protection, but it also protects clients, residents, patients and workers. This pandemic has shown that workplace policies are a form of community prevention, and that workplace specific policies are absolutely critical.

The post pandemic workplace will be different and information that is emerging raises some concerns. Technology will play a much bigger role, and the pace of technological implementation is expected to increase.

For this reason, we ask that a thorough investigation into what is required is undertaken before changes are introduced. In unionized workplaces, it is imperative that unions are a part of this process.

We recommend the following;

- The development of pandemic plans, that are updated regularly
- That workplace inspections during a pandemic and especially in workplaces with outbreaks, are not conducted virtually. This has shown to be dangerous and counterproductive, so an inspection protocol during an infectious disease outbreak is necessary
- The workplace hazard prevention/control program and the hierarchy of controls must be deployed to reduce the likelihood of exposure.

This includes:

- o **Substituting** higher risk procedures with lower risk activities, including allowing ongoing flexible working from home arrangements to facilitate greater physical distancing within workplaces;



- Implementing **engineering controls**, including workplace design, equipment and ventilation system changes to reduce exposure;
- Using **administrative controls** such as staggered scheduling, controlling or restricting access to common spaces, more frequent cleaning/disinfecting of the workplace, preparing and training for emergency situations, as well as training and communication on health and safety procedures and the use of PPE
- PPE must be provided at no cost to the worker
- Availability and stockpiling of PPE with regular inventory
- Ongoing and regular health and safety training
- During a pandemic, that regular risk assessments are conducted to determine the level of risk as the situation develops and the precautionary principle be applied.
- Developing workplace specific infectious disease prevention programs that address specific issues, rather than general issues outlined by the Canadian Public Health Agency
- Given the move towards workplaces where human to human contact will be reduced, and touch surfaces are eliminated in favour of voice activated commands, facial recognition, infrared temperature checks, and worker tracking to follow worker adherence to physical distancing measures, the IAMAW is concerned about privacy issues and the intrusive nature of these methods. While we understand the need to limit the spread of an infectious disease, we urge policy makers to keep in mind the need to balance rights of individuals and their rights negotiated in collective agreements, versus actions taken to protective workplaces as a collective.
- That workplaces opt for one of the afore mentioned methods if absolutely necessary, that information gathered is not used for disciplinary measures, nor tracking productivity; that workplaces are not collecting information, nor are they sharing it with third parties. Lastly, that any such information is shared with the union when necessary.
- That every worker has access to at a minimum, 14 paid, job-protected sick days so that they can take time off work when they are sick and need to quarantine or self-isolate.
- Most importantly, that joint health and safety committees are involved in the development of new policies and introduction of new methods
- Mental Health needs to be recognized and supported in our workplaces through policies and procedures.
- The Right to Refuse must be guaranteed without fear of reprisal.

<https://canadianlabour.ca/health-and-safety-conditions-for-re-opening-sectors-of-the-economy/>

The Gender Lens on the Pandemic

Challenges women face have been exacerbated by the economic uncertainty. Women make up a disproportionate number of the workforce in workplaces that have been on the frontlines of the epidemic, such as, the service industry, healthcare, sanitization, and in the airline industry, where most work as cabin groomers and screening officers. These jobs are characterized by low pay, and precarious employment, and as it's been shown, these are also workplaces with limited availability of PPE. Essentially, women are disproportionately vulnerable to adverse effects of the economic downturn and the pandemic itself; intersectional differences show an even greater divide. For instance, there has been a significant rise in domestic violence, as well as homicides related to domestic violence. Women's shelters are at full capacity, which stresses the need to develop policies, legislation, and workplace policies that address family violence. Hand in hand with these efforts are policies that provide access to secure living arrangements and job protections.

Women also continue to be primary care givers in their families, which not only places an additional burden, but in some cases has limited their ability to return to work given school and daycare closures. Women should not be penalized for refusing recall if they are looking after children or dependents while schools, daycares and other facilities are closed.

Once the economy opens, it's important that government work to remove obstacles for care givers, who are predominantly women. Implementing a universal child care system would single handedly aid in achieving this goal. It's also a measure that allows for full female participation in the labour force by allowing unhindered access to affordable child care.

Instituting a living wage, and compensation that reflects the inherent risk of frontline jobs is essential, and necessary in the short term. Likewise, access to paid sick days, compassionate care leave, paid domestic violence leave are critical. Related to this is provision of health benefits, which is best secured through a National Pharmacare plan. Pharmacare would act as a means of eliminating the loss of health benefits when workers are not able to return to work or when they experience a loss of employment through no fault of their own.

Just as important are continued efforts for secure employment and pay equity legislation through enforceable measures, and in a manner that allows for tracking and oversight of such legislation.

Last, but not least, is an organizational effort to apply an intersectional and gender based lens, not just in public policies, but workplace policies, as well.

Human Rights

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on communities that face entrenched marginalization. Human-rights principles inherently recognize that health is dependent on a range of social determinants and is of heightened concern for groups already facing discrimination, including sexism, ableism and racism. The protection of the right to health is inextricably linked to respect for all other rights.

While social distancing, self-isolation, and quarantining are essential to flattening the curve, we must recognize that these measures create unintended and disproportionate consequences for people living in vulnerable circumstances. The impact of the pandemic has unequal effects, and supports in place may not be enough or appropriate for people living in vulnerable circumstances.

Another effect of the pandemic is increased food insecurity, which is expected to double in Canada, disproportionately affecting Indigenous populations and minority groups. Public policy must address this need, given it's a basic human right, and one that must be guaranteed and protected for all Canadians.

Now more than ever, people living in vulnerable circumstances need our support. We must ensure that we strike the appropriate balance between protecting public health and safety and respecting human rights. We must be fully mindful of how this crisis is amplifying the challenges and disadvantages faced by people living on the margins of society.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities face barriers in many forms, and in many places on a daily basis. With the challenging times we are in today, they are particularly impacted and the barriers they face may be greater. We must ensure that workplaces do not place these workers in greater jeopardy and must ensure that workplace arrangements take their needs into consideration.

With people's daily lives being turned upside down, anxiety and stress will affect us all. For people with mental health issues, isolation can worsen existing conditions, and many do not have the means or support to help them through these



challenging times. The mental health and well-being of all Canadians must be considered as the current situation evolves and workplace parties must have plans in place which includes accommodation for mental health.

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous populations are now facing greater challenges. For example, overcrowding in housing makes social distancing, self-isolation or quarantining an issue. In northern, remote, isolated and urban Indigenous communities, there may be 10 people living in a space designed for two or three. Housing in disrepair also serves to support transmission of respiratory illness.

A lack of access to adequate health care, which is already an issue in many Indigenous communities, make residents more vulnerable and potentially at greater risk of exposure to the virus and this must be taken into consideration when leaves are required to self-isolate or to care for others in their community.

Migrant Workers

It has become abundantly clear that the Canadian agricultural industry relies heavily on migrant labour to meet its needs. Canada amongst comparable economies, has the highest rate of utilization of low paid workers. While travel was restricted to limit the spread of the virus, North American governments allowed free movement of seasonal workers so as not to disrupt the upcoming agricultural season. This shows total disregard for migrant workers, further emphasized by lack of workplace protections, adequate compensation and access to workplace representation and unionization. The value of the work migrant workers perform is irrefutable, so we strongly advocate for full protection of migrant workers. We also ask that migrant workers have access to permanent residence and services.

Immigrant workers also face fears of being dislocated should they exercise a right to refuse unsafe conditions or if they fall ill and are not able to fulfill their contracts. Often workers will be forced into taking unsafe jobs that do not meet even the minimum employment standards. All workers need to be provided safe and secure workplaces and need to have access to healthcare and Employment Insurance should they lose their job through no fault of their own.

LGBTQ2I Community

Members of the LGBTQ2I community who already face additional discrimination, violence or exclusion, in their daily lives, may now face worsening conditions. Many may no longer have access to important community connections they have come to rely on, and may feel additionally isolated living alone or in a house where they are not fully accepted. Many may not be able to access the health supports they need.

Disruptions in accessing health care, including crucial HIV medication and gender affirming treatments, and reluctance to seek health care due to discrimination, stigma and refusal of services experienced by LGBTQ2I people even outside a pandemic;

Elevated risk of domestic and family violence – the most prevalent form of violence faced by LGBTQ2I people on a day-to-day basis is heightened in circumstances of lockdowns, curfews and lack of access to support services and community resources;

Social isolation and increased anxiety which are further heightened by being cut off from chosen families and the LGBTQ2I community. We need to ensure safety at work and at home.

Workers of Colour

Members have often found help in low wage, precarious employment and often find themselves the first to be let go from their employment. Due to limited accessibility to social supports, and systemic discrimination, workers of colour

face a number of additional challenges that make them more susceptible to adverse effects, both health wise and economically.

Closing public spaces means they no longer have access to internet or other social safety supports. We have seen the long lines of people accessing food banks. Applying for employment insurance, wage subsidies health benefits or other measures to help with the cost of living are greatly reduced and may be impossible for many.

Women and children living in dangerous situations at home must now face ever increasing insecurities without escape. Childcare centres and schools that have been closed often lead to employment issues and this must be recognized as a need for accommodation in our workplaces.

We need to make sure that all of the policies that we put into place have a human rights lens to truly ensure that the measures being put into place to come out of this pandemic protect everyone.

We must also ensure that as we return to work that our policies and procedures do not leave anyone out and that we recognize the special circumstances and needs of all of our members.

The right to employment and the right to accommodation must be applied in all of our work and now more than ever, we must work together to correct discriminatory policies in everything that we do.

As new realities emerge, new needs and challenges present themselves, but also new solutions. Now is the time to focus on issues the pandemic has brought into the mainstream narrative. As solutions and responses to current challenges are formed, now is the time for unions to advocate for better protections, public policy, legislation and jobs. This document is the first step in what will be a tenacious and dedicated fight for all workers.

